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Glimpses of Prairie du Rocher

Its Past and Present History
1722-1942

With Illustrations

Published By
BUECHLER PRINTING CO.
332 West Main Street
Belleville, Illinois

GLIMPSES of PRAIRIE du ROCHER

Its History From 1722 to 1942 Intimately
Linked With That of Randolph County
and of the State of Illinois

Written and Compiled by an Editorial and Feature Writer
Published by the Buechler Printing Co., 332 West Main St., Belleville, Ill.
January, 1942

Courtesy Federal Reserve Bank — Herbert Georg Photo

AERIAL VIEW OF FORT DE CHARTRES STATE PARK, RANDOLPH COUNTY, ILLINOIS

The Fort, seat of civil and military government in the Illinois Country for half a century, was first completed in 1720. In 1753-56 it was rebuilt of stone and became one of the strongest forts in North America. Fort de Chartres was occupied by a French garrison until 1765. It was the seat of the British Government in the Illinois Country until 1722. The site was made a State Park in 1913.

GLIMPSES OF PRAIRIE DU ROCHER

ITS EARLY BEGINNINGS:—Just as the history of Illinois has been a part of the history of the nation, so has been the history of Prairie du Rocher, one of the earliest settlements of the State of Illinois.

Peoria, long known as Pimitoui was established in 1691. Cahokia in 1699, Kaskaskia in 1703, Prairie du Rocher in 1722. To keep the lines between Canada and Louisiana open, to protect the scattered settlements along the Mississippi Valley, forts were built, one of the most pretentious being that of Fort de Chartres in 1720, and two years later, in 1722, the first rude cabins of the little hamlet to be known as Prairie du Rocher were erected on its present site. We picture one of the early cabins in this publication.

The town was founded by Jean Theresa Langlois, a nephew of Pierre Boisbriant who arrived from France in December, 1718, and started the erection of a fort which was called Fort de Chartres, and which was completed in 1720. It was built of logs, and was considered very excellent for defense purposes. It served the Illinois Country for a half century. In 1753-56, it was rebuilt of stone and became one of the strongest forts in North America. Fort de Chartres was occupied by a French garrison until 1765. It was the first seat of British Government in the Illinois Country until 1772. The site was made a State Park in 1913.

Pierre Dugue de Boisbriant was, at the time of the building of the fort, commandant of the Illinois country. The fort was named for the Duc de Chartres, son of the Regent of France.

Prairie du Rocher received its name from the rock bluffs at the bottom of which the little village was located, and where it is today so beautifully situated.

Fort de Chartres was barely done when there arrived at the village of St. Anne, which was the mother village of Prairie du Rocher, a Frenchman, Phillipe Francois Renault, a representative of the Company of the West, to engage in mining and prospecting operations. He had left France in the Spring of 1719, with two hundred miners, laborers, and a full complement of mining utensils.

Historic Brickey Home at Prairie du Rocher

On the way to the Province of Louisiana he bought, in St. Domingo, five hundred negroes to work the mines and plantations he desired to establish. A large number of these slaves were brought to the Illinois district.

From Fort de Chartres and Prairie du Rocher Renault sent his expert miners and skilled workmen in every direction hunting for precious metals. The bluffs skirting the American Bottoms on the East were diligently searched for minerals, but nothing encouraging was found. In what is now Jackson, Randolph and St. Clair counties the ancient traces of furnaces were visible as late as 1850. Silver Creek, which runs south and through Madison and St. Clair counties, was so named on the supposition that the metal was plentiful along that stream.

THE DAWN OF PRAIRIE DU ROCHER:—It was during the year 1722 that the village of Prarie du Rocher was begun. It was then, as it is now, located near the bluffs, due East from Fort de Chartres, about three and a half miles. Early history tells us that some of the houses were built of stone, there being an abundance of that material in the bluffs just back of the village. To this village was then granted a very large *Common* which it holds to this day. This *Common* is about thre miles square and lies back of the village on the uplands.

The first little village was probably like others of the frontier. It consisted of a straggling lot of crude cabins, built without reference to definitely platted streets, and constructed with no pretentions to architectural beauty. Its inhabitants were French, and Indians, and Negro.

The industrial life of these people consisted of fishing and hunting, cultivation of the soil, some grist and flour milling, some lumber milling and tanning of hides. Mining was not then extensively engaged in. Coal was not discovered at so early a day, and the forests provided abundant fuel.

The fishing, done with hickory pole and line, the hunting with blunderbuss and bow and arrow was partly a pastime, but the table of the early French settlers of Prairie du Rocher was often liberally supplied from this source. The soil was fertile and yielded abundantly to only a very slight cultivation. Wheat was early grown and the grain was ground in a crude water mill, from which developed the giant Prairie du Rocher Mills of the present day.

As early as 1722 the settlers had swine and black cattle. The cultivation of the grape was also begun at an early date, and the excellent vintage produced, graced many a festive table, when community and social life began to be more settled and secure. The Indians round about Prairie du Rocher raised poultry, spun the wool of the Buffalo and wove a cloth which they dyed black, yellow or red, from vegetable dyes extracted from berries and bark. Later on woolen and silk cloth was brought from France and Canada, and these were woven and fashioned into the clothes of early days.

SOCIAL LIFE OF EARLY SETTLERS—The social life of the early settlers of Prairie du Rocher, as of other settlements, was one of pleasure. It is said they passed much of their time in singing, dancing and gaming. Long time ago they organized a society known ever since as *La Guignolle*, which annually in May had, and still has a grand celebration and song and dance festival. At this festival a *May Queen* was chosen and crowned. *During late years this custom has been extended, and girls from other localities are sometimes chosen as MAY QUEEN, a custom not to be commended. The LA GUIGNOLLE should be retained as a distinctive feature of the social life of Prairie du Rocher.*

HORSES AND CATTLE INTRODUCED:—Horses and cattle were introduced in this vicinity very early. It is said the cattle came from Canada, while the horses were of Arabian strain and were brought from the Southwest by the Spaniards. It is not to be understood that the cultivation of the soil was of a very high order in 1772, and for some decades after. Utensils were crude. The plows were of wood and were usually drawn by oxen. The oxen were fastened together by the horns, by means of a flat piece of wood, not as later on yokes as was customary with the English. Wagons were usually small two-wheeled carts, made by the early settlers themselves, usually with little iron, and were pulled or pushed by hand, seldom by horses or oxen.

EARLY CROPS AND FLOWERS:—The crops of the early French settlers were cultivated by themselves and by slaves or indentured servants. The settlers of Prairie du Rocher were much given to the cultivation of small fruits, and flowers. Cherry, apple, peach and plum trees grew in every yard. Large beds of flowers were cultivated, and wild flowers were gathered in abundance to adorn homes and church.

As late as 1825, when LaFayette visited Kaskaskia, Cahokia and St. Louis, the French inhabitants searched the woods for wild flowers and the banquet hall at Kaskaskia and the *Jarrott Mansion* at Cahokia, where he and his entourage were feasted and dined, were literally filled with flowers.

EARLY FRENCH GOVERNMENT:—In 1717 the Illinois country became a district of the French Province of Louisiana, and was governed by a major commandant, who, besides exercising military powers supervised fur trading and agriculture. Other district officers were a doctor, a notary, and interpreter, and a judge who administered the *coutume de Paris* or common law of Paris. Each village maintained a militia company, the captain of which was an agent of the district judge and the major commandant.

Although there was no legal basis for local government, that function was admirably performed by *marguilliers* (church wardens) elected by the parishioners of the Catholic churches of Cahokia, Kaskaskia and Prairie du Rocher. In addition to accounting of church property, the *marguilliers* passed acts concerning the time of harvest, fence repair, and in short the general welfare of the village.

We refer on another page to the election of judges for this district. One of these judges, in later days, was M. Andrew Barbeau, who was present at the corner-stone laying of St. Joseph's Church, on July 19, 1858, when a new brick church was erected.

JEAN ST. THERESA LANGLOIS:—It has been difficult to trace the line of descendants of this founder of Prairie du Rocher. In a document of December 30, 1740, we learn that the late Ettienne Langlois married Catherine Beaudrau, a widow, and had the following children: Marie Louise, who married Pierre Messenger; Marie Josefine, m. Louis Populus sieur de St. Photes; Toinette, m. Pierre Boucher de Monbrun sieur de Soudray; Francois, Louis, Girard, Perine and Auguste. These last five were minors. From other sources it is learned that Ettienne had two brothers, August who lived at Kaskaskia, and Louis. What relation the notary Pierre Langlois was to these is not apparent. He was married to Catherine Normand Labriere, and had two children, Pierre and Marie Louise. The latter signed a marriage contract with Pierre Lefebhve of Vincennes, October 9, 1785. Pierre Langlois died in 1789, and his widow took oath to the inventory of the property December 14, of that year.

EARLY LEGAL TRANSACTIONS: — Reference is made in Kaskaskia records, as far back as 1778 to legal transactions. One partains to the death of Antoine Cottinault, in which a scribe of the house of M. Barbeau, captain of militia and commanding the said place of Prairie du Rocher, sought the privilege of being appointed administrator, and to have a guardian chosen for the minor children. This petition was resented by the spirited widow, and its prayer was, though first granted, soon rescinded. She was rather permitted to act as guardian of her children, and to enjoy, and make use of her goods whatsoever they may be without interference of anyone, whoever he may be. The property thus placed in her care included a tannery. A sign of the commercial life of Prairie du Rocher at so early a day in its history.

Another reference is to Instructions to George Rogers Clark from Patrick Henry, Governor of Virginia, in which Clark is instructed *to spare no pains to conciliate the affections of the French and Indians,* as their friendship was of great importance to the struggling Union of States as then constituted.

Another reference is to a strict command by Colonel Clark, prohibiting the sale of intoxicants to Indians or Negro slaves, or to lend or rent to any red or black slaves their house, buildings, and courts, after sunset or for the night, for the purpose of dancing, feasting or holding nocturnal assemblies therein.

Beneath the Bluffs at Prairie du Rocher

Still another reference is found relative to an election at Prairie du Rocher held on May 17, 1779, at which election two magistrates for the district were chosen. The first judge chosen was M. Jean Baptiste Barbau, captain of the militia, and the second judge chosen was M. Antoine Duchafour de Louvieres, lieutenant of said militia.

REMARKS

The history of Prairie du Rocher is an interesting one, and worthy of extended research. It is hoped that this first attempt will stimulate further study and that at some time in the near future we may be able to publish a comprehensive review of this quaint and historic little city.

EARLY CENSUS:—The census of Prairie du Rocher held in 1787 listed the names of 16 inhabitants who signed the register for themselves and male children, making a total of 62 registrants; and 6 inhabitants who did not personally sign the register, and their male children, making a total of 17, thus showing a grand total of 79 males, at that time. The present population, men, women and children as of the census of 1940, is 540.

Another important document petitioned the Congress of the United States to grant to every male inhabitant of the village of Prairie du Rocher, without any discrimination of age, a tract of five hundred acres of land, gratis and for ever, in the vicinity of their holdings, and the village. This was a petition drawn up by Bartholomew Tardiveau, agent, on September 15, 1787. This petition was not granted, but subsequently all titles and claims justly established were confirmed.

PRAIRIE DU ROCHER IN 1941:—It was a most beautiful day in July, 1941, that the writer rode with the publisher of this brief *GLIMPSE* of Prairie du Rocher from Belleville, Illinois, to the little village. Past and through other historic villages, they drove and everywhere admired the beauty of the skies, the fair and fragrant air, the fertile fields and splendid homes, the hill-side scenery which stretched in every direction, up and down winding roadways, down to Prairie du Rocher.

We did not pass the *big spring* which was the stopping place for the early travelers from Kaskaskia and Fort de Chartres to Cahokia. We traveled a different route, but equally as picturesque and enchanting. From a distance, after getting into the bottom, the hills and bluffs presented as imposing a view as do the famed pallisades of the Hudson, or the beautiful dells of Wisconsin. And suddenly we descended a turn in the road and found ourselves in Prairie du Rocher. There it lay! Here live the descendants of the French of Fort de Chartres, who chose to stay rather than to follow St. Ange to St. Louis. Here is the typical French village, where all is sunshine and flowers, where love and piety prevail, where the very atmosphere seems inspiring with French accents of the past. Three miles due west lie the now rebuilt, once the ruins of the old fort.

We spent some time in Prairie du Rocher, some pictures were taken to illustrate this story. Brief passages shall tell of our rambles adown its main street and its lanes. Here was still heard the chatter of the squirrel, the hoot of the owl, the murmur of the sylvan brook, the sighing of the wind in the trees, the crow of the canticleer of the morning, the neighing of the horse, the lowing of the cattle, the grunt of the pig, the barking of the dog.

And in the towering woods the whole rapturous rush of wild life was unleashed by the magic of bright and glowing summer; there was heard the quail's welcome whistle; the thrush's silver lyric; the robin's possessive strut; and in the hidden pond was heard the splash of the fish or the sudden tumble of the bull frog.

And above all was seen the rugged trust of almost primeval forest; and green hills melting into blue horizons in which silvery flecked and mountainous, billowing clouds were sailing calmly onward.

Here was seen, this day, July 15, 1941 a typical American village, hallowed to the memory, proud of the inheritance of its first settlers, the French of old France and of Canada; the singers and dancers of *La Guignolle*.

HISTORY OF ST. ANNE AND ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH:—We have related how the village of Prairie du Rocher was founded. The history of its Catholic Church is coterminous with the foundation of the village. The first church was located at St. Anne Fort de Chartres, the name of the church being St. Anne. The parish register was opened in 1721 by two resident Jesuit priests, Joseph Ignatius le Boullenger and de Kereben. Soon after the founding of Prairie du Rocher a Chapel of Ease was erected and attached to the parish of St. Anne. This chapel was made use of for many decades, the church of St. Anne gradually falling into disuse and decay. Parish records were kept however, and in 1767 these records and the sacred vessels were brought from St. Anne's to St. Joseph's Chapel The few inhabitants of St. Anne did not want this removal made, and instituted a civil suit for their return to St. Anne. The suit being tried before English justices was decided in favor of the inhabitants of St. Anne and the vessels and records were returned to the building near Fort de Chartres, which was not suitable for their care and preservation, however. They were later returned to Prairie du Rocher, where they remained.

BUILDING OF FIRST CHURCH: In 1765, according to the parish records, a church was built on the site of the present cemetery, consisting of upright logs, the building being 30x34 feet. The logs were set three feet in the ground on ends, and the spaces between the logs were chincked with small stone and mortar. In 1767 the records and sacred vessels were brought from St. Anne's to the Church at Prairie du Rocher, and these records are still in the possession of the pastor of the present St. Joseph's Church and have been objects of interest to many historically inclined visitors.

St. Joseph's parish continued to grow and it was found in 1858 that a larger church was needed. Accordingly on July 19, 1858, the corner-stone of the present brick church was laid by Right Reverend Henry Damian

Juncker, D.D., Bishop of Alton, assisted by Rev. Father Nicholas Perrin, pastor of Kaskaskia and administrator of St. Joseph's parish. In the corner-stone was placed a document giving all the facts of the dedication, and noting that James Buchanan was president of the United States, and William Bissel governor of the state of Illinois. The corner-stone laying ceremony was held in the presence of M. Andrew Barbeau, John and Ambrose Ker, and a large body of parishioners and visitors.

When this church was built the parish owned two whole blocks of land, one occupied by the Church, parish house and a small frame building which was formerly the residence of the parish school teacher but is now, and up to July, 1941, was used as a home for the sisters teaching in the parochial school. (Soon they will occupy the remodeled rectory, and the pastor, Rev. Raymond L. Harbaugh, will occupy a fine modern parish house, now being erected.)

The second block contains the parish school and playgrounds.The first school building was built in the sixties of the ninetenth century, it being a small one-story frame building which is still used as an auxiliary school. An addition was built to it during 1931. The present brick school was built in 1885-86 at a cost of $5,000. In 1893 it was considerably damaged by a tornado, which took off the roof, the amount of damage being $1,800.

With the close of school in June 1935, Prof. P. G. Ehresmann rounded out thirty-five successive and successful years as teacher and principal of our school. During these thirty-five years, Prof. Ehresmann was also organist of St. Joseph's Church. He retired as teacher and organist with complete satisfaction of duty well performed and assured of the esteem of all the people.

In September one year was added to the school curriculum, making it a three-year high school with Mr. Harry Dearworth and Mr. Howard Wilcox as teachers. There are forty-five pupils enrolled. Four Sisters of the Precious Blood Order, are employed in the grade school. The number of pupils in grade school in 1940 exceeded 125.

Mr. Dearworth, much concerned in the welfare of our boys, interested them in scouting and the boys became enthusiastic. In consequence of Mr. Dearworth's zeal in the matter, St. Joseph's Congregation received a Charter of the Boy Scouts of America and Troop No. 39—Prairie du Rocher, was formed.

In 1910 new pews and a communion railing were installed in the church; in 1912 the steam heating plant was placed, and numerous improvements were made to the church. In 1925 the transcept of the sanctuary was built, and other extensive improvements were made.

St. Joseph's Church from a distance—Prairie du Rocher

GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION: — During the beautful month of June, 1939, the parish and village celebrated in festive manner the Golden Jubilee of the Very Rev. Wm. Van Delft, Dean. It was an ocasion of great rejoicing and was made festive by splendid religious ceremonials, and secular observance. As a mark of the esteem in which the venerable pastor was held, a new Main Altar and a new organ were erected, new Stations of the Cross were placed and the interior of the church was frescoed.

BEAUTIFIED CEMETERY:—The present cemetery is the original one first platted when the first church was built in Prairie du Rocher, it also being the site of the first church. It was the custom of the early days among the French to bury the dead around the church. About the year 1935 all graves were levelled and foot stones were buried, so that today this ancient burial ground presents a beautiful sight with its smooth green lawn and a contrast of varied colored markers.

PARISH REGISTERS:—The parish registers of St. Joseph's begins with the abandonment of St. Anne du Fort de Chartres in 1765, and the records preceding are those of St. Anne, now in possession of St. Joseph's, and in which also entries of St. Joseph's of Prairie du Rocher and of Our Lady of the Visitation of St. Philippe were made previous to 1765.

BIOGRAPHY OF VERY REVEREND WILLIAM VAN DELFT:—William Van Delft, was born at St. Louis on February 26, 1865, a son of John and Anna Margaret (Schluetter) Van Delft. While a child the family moved to New Douglas, Illinois, from whence the subject of this sketch went to college at Teutopolis, Ill., and later entered the seminary at St. Meinrad, Indiana, where he finished his preparation for the priesthood.

On June 15, 1889, he was ordained a priest at the Cathedral at Belleville and said his first mass at St. Boniface Catholic Church at Edwardsville on June 20, 1889.

His first assignment was as pastor at Mound City, Ill., from which point he had charge of missions over Pulaski, Johnson, Pope and Massac counties. He remained at Mound City from 1889 to 1900, when he was appointed pastor at Sparta, with a mission at St. Leo's, near Modoc, taking care of that mission until the present church was built at Walsh, when he was relieved of the mission at St. Leo's and assigned the mission at Walsh. He remained at Sparta from 1900 to 1911.

Father Van Delft took charge of St. Joseph's Church at Prairie du Rocher, on February 28, 1911, and in 1914 celebrated his silver jubilee as a priest here. On January 12, 1927, he was appointed a Dean, and on June 20, 1939, celebrated his fiftieth anniversary as a priest.

During his pastorate he made many improvements in the church, the most extensive in 1925, when the church was re-dedicated. The school building has been improved and modernized, the cemetery improved, and in the Jubilee year of the Diocese of Belleville, other improvements have been made to the interior of the church under the supervision of the Very Rev. William Van Delft, to whom at that time a booklet was dedicated, for his long and faithful service in the Service of The Lord.

Among the many clergymen of St. Joseph's Parish who deserve mention we wish only to add that of Rev. John Timon, C.M., who resided in Prairie du Rocher for a short time prior to being consecrated Bishop of Buffalo Diocese. Rev. Henry F. Frohboese was pastor from 1864 to 1876; Rev. Charles Krewet from 1876 to 1902; Rev. Charles Eschmann from 1902 to 1911. Of these last mentioned, two we shall write more extensively in a history of Waterloo which we contemplate compiling and publishing.

It was the singular honor for St. Joseph's Parish to present the first Holy Communion class, to His Excellency Bishop Henry J. Althoff, D. D., shortly after he had been elevated to the episcopal see of Belleville Diocese.

THE PRESENT PASTOR:—The present zealous and vigorous pastor of this parish is the Rev. Raymond Harbaugh, who came to Prairie du Rocher during the year 1939. Under his administration the parish has continued its progress, and the many improvements inaugurated by Rev. Harbaugh will redound to his credit, and that of the parish in years to come. Rev. Harbaugh came to this little city from historic old Shawneetown, where he was pastor of Immaculate Conception Church for a number of years.

TWO HISTORIC EVENTS:—Two hundred and twenty years ago the village of Prairie du Rocher was founded. That was an historic event, worthy of some record. Two hundred and twenty years ago a book was written, and published, which has been a first-seller ever since, and has been re-published countless times, and read by tens of milions. Its title is known throughout all the world, it is "Robinson Crusoe." It was written by Daniel Defoe, an Englishman, who founded his story upon the experiences of Alexander Selkirk, a castaway on the lonely island of Juan Fernandez. We link these two historic events, in this publication, because of the striking fact that both were born in the same year.

DESCRIPTIVE MATTER

The present Civic Government of Prairie du Rocher is lodged in a mayor and several alderman. It consists of the following gentlemen who are serving the community with distinction and with considerable progressiveness: Dr. John T. Finley, mayor; Elmer A. Laurent, trustee and acting mayor; Leo. Laurent, trustee; Welda Laurent, trustee; Emile J. Dufrenne, trustee; Ralph Melliere, trustee.

Its Singing Society operates under the name "Fort Chartres La Guillonnee Society," although various spellings have been applied to it in publications of the past. An authority on French pronunciation tells us that this name should be pronounced *La Giu Annee,* and he was considerably put out when we gave it a different pronunciation. However the fact remains that this singing society contributed considerably to a great festive orcasion, when on Sunday, July 14, 1940, the Annual Fete commemorating the Fall of the Bastille was celebrated. The music to the song was provided by Mrs. Anne Andre-Clark, now residing at Santa Monica, California; she was born in the Brickey house, which we picture, long time ago. Before her second marriage to Mr. Clark she was Mrs. Charles P. Johnson, who was at one time Governor of Missouri, and was noted as a great criminal lawyer. Captain N. C. Duclos is president of the society, and Leo F. Duclos is its vice-president. This society also took a very active part in enlivening the dedicatory services of the now restored Cahokia Court house, on May 30, 1940.

MANUFACTURING ESTABLISHMENTS: — A number of manufacturing concerns may said to still exist in Prairie du Rocher. Among these is the large elevator,

operated under the ownership of the Cole Milling Co., of Chester, with immense storage capacity. The Columbia Farmers' Co-Operative Grain Company also operates a mill and elevator in this city. One of the principal industries is that of the Columbia Quarry Company, which operates extensive quarries in the bluffs at Prairie du Rocher, where building stone, and road material are produced in large quantities. Still another establishment which may be classed also as a manufacturing establishment is the lumber yard prominently situated at the entrance to the village, and several saw-mills which manufacture railroad ties, and staves.

MERCANTILE ESTABLISHMENTS:—In the advertising pages of this book the names of several mercantile establishments will be found displayed. Among these prominently to be mentioned because of the long years of continuous service to the community is the Connors' Department store, situated on the main street of the village; the Brickey & Co., store, which carries an extensive line of goods; the Allard's store which in point of time and service is to be reckoned among the leading mercantile establishments. Other establishments of similar character are the Bielefeld Garage, which conducts a comprehensive service in its line, and the Berry's Market, which lately has absorbed the Siegfried Bros. store. We must not forget to mention in this book the splendid eating establishments conducted by and known as the Berry's Cafe, as also Lou's Tavern, where an appetizing meal also is served.

FARMING DISTRICT:—We have already referred to the early farming conducted by the early settlers in this vicinity. It spreads all around Prairie du Rocher, in the valleys, on the hillsides, on the table-lands 'round about. Rich in soil fertility the country presents a most beautiful appearance. Wheat, oats, barley, corn, soy-beans, clover and alfalfa are grown in abundance. Dairy farming and poultry raising are extensively indulged in, and many orchards of apples, peaches and pears are to be seen, the trees of which are beautiful in blossoming time, and more beautiful still when rich harvests are being gathered. In brief the farming district of Prairie du Rocher is one of the best to be found in all of Southern Illinois, known for fertility of soil, and for the diligence and progressiveness of its farmers.

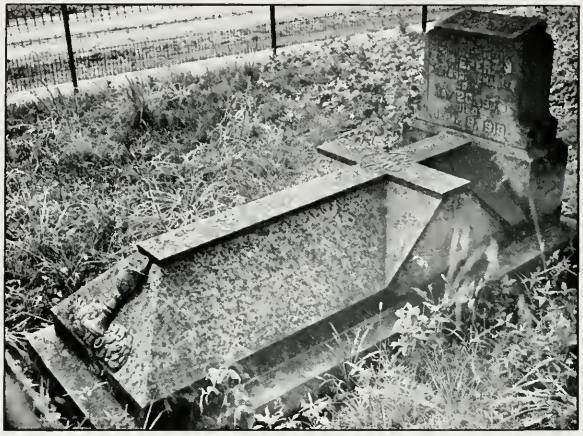
OUR FRIENDS AND ADVERTISERS:— Whilst the issuing of this booklet on Prairie du Rocher has not been primarily a money-making scheme, but intensively a historic development, the publisher and editor take great pleasure in acknowledging the valuable aid thus extended in making possible the publication in its present form.

THE WINNING OF CROSBY'S OPERA HOUSE: — In the year 1865, shortly after the close of the Civil War, there was built in Chicago a theatre building which in size and magnificence became famed throughout the Midwest. It was the Crosby Opera House, and its initial cost was above $600,000.00. Six hundred thousand dollars. But this enterprise was not financially successful, and two year later it was raffled on lottery tickets. Among the purchasers of these lottery tickets was a native of Prairie du Rocher. William Lee, who was the lucky winner. He sold the building and ground for the sum said to have been in excess of a quarter million dollars. This huge sum was invested in enterprises of diversified nature, among them the development of the Plate-glass industry of Crystal City, and Festus, Missouri; and the speculative ventures in the Silver and Gold Mines of Colorado, as also in Lead and Silver Mines of Missouri.

Armin Palmier Typical French Home at Prairie du Rocher

THE BRICKEY HOMESTEAD: One of the pretentious homes of Prairie du Rocher is the old Brickey homestead. It lies on the main street leading through the village, and its well-kept lawns and wide porches bespeak the true hospitality which once was there, so lavishly bestowed. The mansion is a wood structure, and its chief charm lies in the fact that, although no longer the residence of the Brickey family, it has ever been kept under their proprietorship, and has been supervised by competent caretakers. The rooms of this old mansion are still filled with many articles of interest. We show a picture of the exterior in this issue.

THE ARSON PALMIER HOUSE:—One of the oldest houses in Prairie du Rocher, this home seemd worthy of picturization. We class it among the typically French period buildings. Its wide porch runs the entire length of the house and invites to comfort and rest. The inner rooms bespeak the true culture and the religious spirit of its inhabitants, as does the entire village, up to the present. We found in this old home a number of pictures, depicting religious scenes, one in particular which impressed us. It was a "First Holy Communion" picture. The inscription read: "Alice Alicia Louvier, First Holy Communion, 30th day of April, 1882," and the signature was that of Reverend Charles Krewet, who for many years administered to the parish.



Typical Tombstone in St. Patrick's Cemetery, Ruma, Illinois

A FESTIVE DAY IN 1779:—On a certain day in January, 1779, (the exact date cannot now be ascertained) the little village of Prairie du Rocher was all aglow with excitement. A party of soldiers had arrived. It was a detachment under the command of Col. Rogers Clark, and they decided to spend the evening at the hospitable home of Captain Jean Baptiste Barbeau, (Barber). Col. Rogers Clark tells of this hospitable reception and the "ball' that followed: "We went cheerflly to Prara De Ruch, 12 miles from Kaskaskia, war I intended to spend the Eavening at Captn Barbers."

"The Gentlemen & Ladies immediately assembled at a Ball ofr our Entertainment; we spent the fore part of the night very agreeably; but about 12 Oclock there was a very sudden change by an Express arriveing, enforming us that Governour Hammilton was within three miles of Kaskaskia with eight hundred Men, and was determined to attack the Fort that night. . .. "

Col. Clark at once ordered his horses saddled in order, if possible, to get into the Fort before the attack could be made. . . . . Clark's brave conduct inspired a number of young men of Prairie du Rocher to saddle their horses and accompany their intrepid leader. But the great attack never occurred. The fact, however, remains, that Col. Clark danced with some of the belles and mesdames of old Prairie du Rocher on the night of a certain day in January, 1779.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE CLIMATE IN 1699.—Record is made of a letter in which Reverend Julien Bineteau, S.J., writes of the climate of the Illinois country. "I am to return to the Illinois of Tamaroa in the Spring. There is a great difference between this climate and that of Quebec, where the cold lasts a long time, and a great quantity of snow falls; whereas here, as a rule the snow remains but a very short time. We have hardly felt the cold during the whole of this month of January. Vines climb all around the trees, up to their tops; the grapes are wild, and are not nearly as good as those of France. There are an indefinite number of nut and plum trees of various kinds; also some small apples. We find here two kinds of fruit trees that are not known in France. They are assimines and piakimines. (Probably persimmons and wild crabapples.) Their fruit is good. We in this country go without all other delicious fruits of France. Game is plentiful, such as ducks, geese, bustards, swans, cranes and turkeys. Ox, bear and deer furnish the substantial meats that we eat in this game country.

THE OLD FORT:—In an old book we find reference to the proposed building of Fort de Chartres. We picture the new fort in this issue. It read "The old village of Kaskaskia is regarded with reason as a very advantageous site for the stone-fort, which the Court orders built in the Illinois. Limestone, wood for construction, a river to harbor the boats, a view over the Mississippi about two leagues up and two leagues down, the rocky bluff which slopes very gently down to the Mississippi, a prairie adjoining said bluff, the Mississippi, too, which would be under protection of the fort, the Missouri, too, which empties into the river five leagues from here on the west side of the said river, and the Illinois river which mingles its water therewith eleven leagues from here on the west (east), all these considerations would seem to

insist on the necessity of building the fort in question in this place, as is very much the talk now. In this case the Seigneurie of the Tamaroais would soon be established from one end to the other."

This was written on April 12, 1735, and is found in the Laval Mss.

AN IRISHMAN IN COMMAND:—Even during the French occupation of the Illlinois Territory, it was an Irishman who commanded the country, and he was vested with almost vice-regal power, in the name of King Louis of France. He was known as Chevalier Charles Mac Carthy. He was born in Ireland in 1706 and was there known as "Mac Carty Mac Taig," which means literally, "Mac Carthy, the son of Taig or Thaddeus." He was an officer in the French Army, and in 1731 was sent to Louisiana in charge of a detachment of engineers. On the 20th of August, 1751, Mac Carthy sailed from New Orleans with a small military force to take command of and rebuild Fort de Chartres. They arrived at Fort de Chatres on March 28, 1752, and from that time until 1760 Chevalier Mac Carthy was in command of all the French troops in the Illinois country. When, under his direction, Fort de Chartres was rebuilt, it was regarded as the best fort in America.

NOTE:—The illustrations in this booklet were made from photographs taken by Carlos Piaget, of the Piaget Studios, 3800 West Pine Street, St. Louis, Missouri.

Old Hotel in Kaskaskia, Where Lafayette Was Entertained In 1825

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